Indigenous environmental defenders and the legacy of Macli-ing Dulag: Anti-dam dissent, assassinations, and protests in the making of Philippine energyscape

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5.1. The Chico river dam project and Indigenous Peoples' dissent

The Government of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986), himself hailing from northern Luzon, proposed the damming of the Chico River using World Bank funds. Chico River, which is the longest tributary of the Cagayan River and traverses both the Cordillera and Cagayan Valley regions, has its headwaters in Mount Data in Bauko (Mountain Province) (see Fig. 3). The Kalinga Indigenous Peoples live on its banks, and, for three decades (1960s to 1980s), resisted the Chico River Dam Project. This resistance became a landmark case study concerning Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, led to World Bank's operational guidelines on Indigenous Peoples-affected projects, and, most importantly, built an identity for the Igorot peoples (a collective term for Cordillera's Indigenous Peoples), according to Bantayog ng mga Bayani (*translation: Monument of Heroes*) [55]. The making of this identity, this paper argues, became an important part of Indigenous Peoples' mobilization narrative and in the production of dissent in Philippine energyscape.

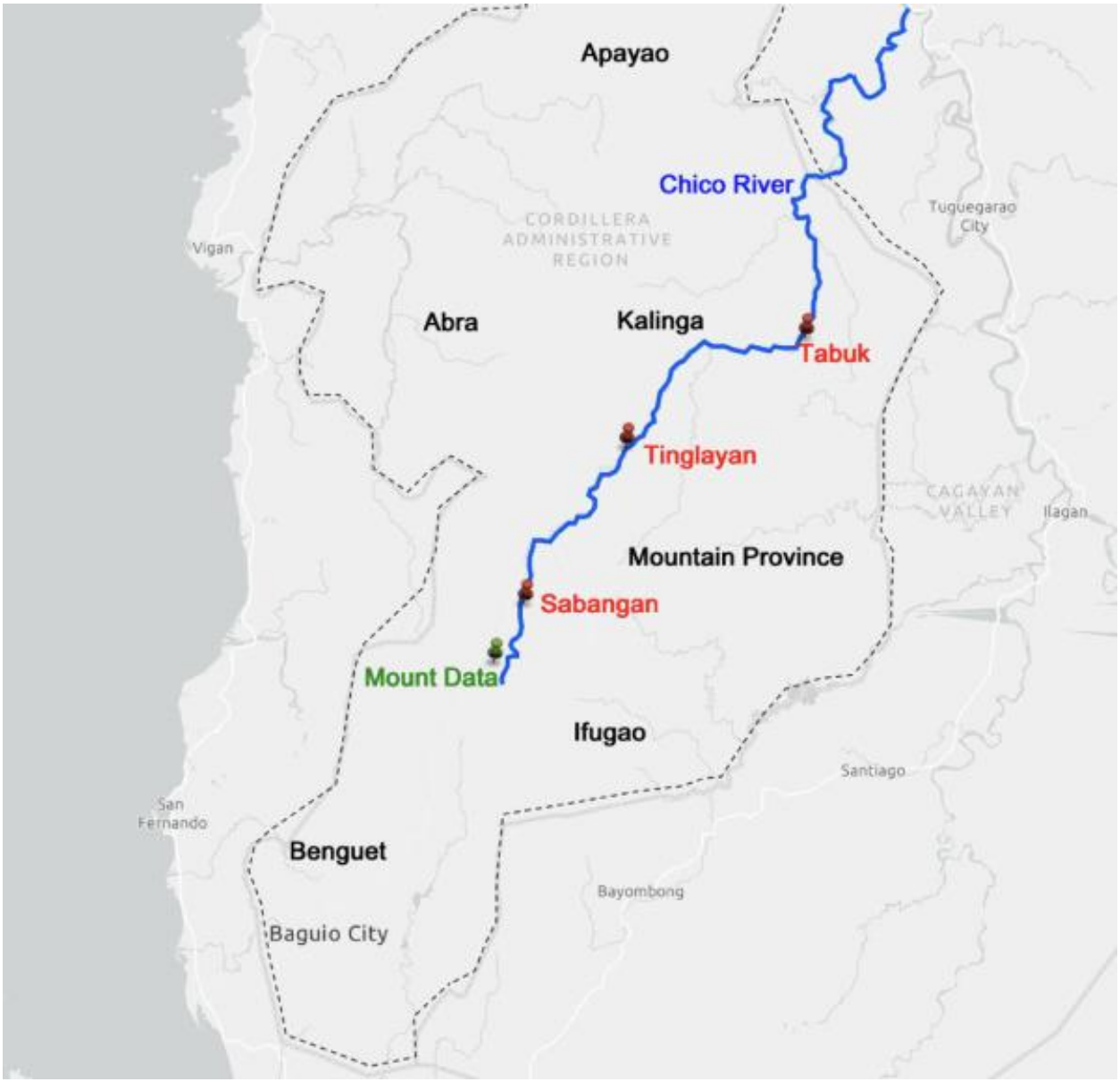

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Fig. 3. The Chico River and the locations of the proposed hydropower facilities in the 1970s planned World Bank-funded Chico River Dam Project.

First conceived in 1965, the Chico River Dam Project was proposed as a multipurpose facility for irrigation and hydropower generation. The project became more feasible when the price of oil quadrupled due to the Oil Shock of 1973–1974, following an oil embargo by OPEC against the United States [56]. Marcos asked the World Bank to fund the construction of four dams: a 100-MW and 360-MW facilities in Sabangan (Mountain Province), a 100-MW facility in Tinglayan (Kalinga), and a 450-MW facility in Tabuk (Kalinga) [57] (see Fig. 3). Marcos, however, made the proposal without the

knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples who live in these places. The Marcos Government then tapped the German firm Lahmeyer International GMBH (Frankfurt) to conduct technical feasibility studies, which they submitted in 1973 [58]. By 1974—during which surveyors from the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR), a government agency in-charge of power generation and transmission, conducted surveys in preparation for dam construction—the Indigenous Peoples finally learned about the Project. They went to see Marcos in Malacañang, the presidential residence in Manila, who scolded them saying they would need to sacrifice something on behalf of national development [55]. To pacify the Indigenous Peoples, Marcos sent Manuel "Manda" Elizalde, his Presidential Assistant for National Minorities "to the Chico area, bringing with him truckloads of food, chocolate bars, basketballs, flashlights and other trinkets" [55,59].

The Project would impact Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods and culture as it would submerge their sacred lands from south of Bontoc (Mountain Province) to north of Tomiangan in Tabuk (Kalinga) [60]. The construction of the Tabuk facility alone would lead to the complete submergence of six *barangays* (translation: villages, the smallest administrative division in the Philippines) rendering more than 100,000 Kalinga and Bontoc Indigenous Peoples homeless [58]. To mitigate these impacts, the Marcos Government offered financial incentives if communities agreed to be relocated. The Indigenous Peoples, however, rejected these overtures citing ancestor worship—where dead ancestors are believed to be forever present in the place [58]—and the obliteration of tribal relationships across Indigenous People communities as expressed in their *bodong* (translation: peace pacts and alliances), which form the system of laws in these places[5] [58]. Macli-ing Dulag, a *pangat* (translation: leader) of the Butbut people of Kalinga, expressed the Indigenous Peoples' collective dissent and registered his willingness to die for their lands in an interview by Ma. Ceres Doyo [61]:

> …the question of the dam is more than political. The question is life—our Kalinga life. *Apo Kabunian*,[6] the Lord of us all, gave us this land. It is sacred, nourished by our sweat. It shall become even more sacred when it is nourished by our blood.

As NAPOCOR began their survey mission, Macli-ing organized a bodong in Tanglang (Kalinga) to rally opposition against the project. A group of women, meanwhile, went to NAPOCOR's campsites in Basao (Tinglayan, Kalinga), dismantled them, and performed the *lusay,* where elderly women disrobed and displayed their tattooed torsos and limbs in front of soldiers and surveyors, an act believed to bring bad luck to men observing them ([60], cf. [62]).

A year later, in May 1975, at St. Bridget's School in Quezon City in Metro Manila, 150 pangats organized the Bodong Federation, an alliance to collectively oppose the Project, and produced an agreement called *Pagta ti*

Bodong, which, for the first time, formally united the Bontoc and Kalinga Indigenous Peoples in opposition [61,63]. This pagta, a multilateral agreement against a common external threat brought about by the dam project, consolidated the resistance [64]. The group received widespread support from academics, church groups, and NGOs, including the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos, and the Free Legal Assistance Group, as well as from groups abroad [55]. This dissent forced the Marcos Government to temporarily pull out its NAPOCOR survey team.

To neutralize opposition, Marcos [65], governing with Presidential Decrees—a power he granted himself as a dictator—constituted the Kalinga Special Development Region consisting Lubuangan, Tinglayan, Tanudan and Pasil municipalities. These are municipalities affected by the proposed dam, and where indigenous oppositions were from. Macli-ing Dulag was from Tinglayan. With the Philippines under the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1981), Project-affected areas were duly militarized to control dissent. The Government brought in the 51st and 60th Philippine Constabulary Brigades and the 44th Philippine Army Brigade to strengthen the Philippine Constabulary forces already present in the area. In April 1977, these state agents arrested, without warrant, at least 150 locals (including pangats) accusing them of subversion and obstruction [58]. The incarceration of the pangats, however, did not avert further mobilizations; instead Indigenous Peoples organized a larger bodong in June 1978. The Government, in response, declared parts of the Chico River "free fire zones," where its armed forces could freely fire on any trespassers at will [58]. In December 1979, the pangats organized another bodong—this time with more than two thousand Indigenous Peoples present—and designated Macli-ing (Fig. 4) as the opposition's official spokesperson [61].

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Fig. 4. Macli-ing Dulag [60].

On 24 April 1980, Marcos' military agents in the Army's 4th Infantry Division led by Lt. Leodegario Adalem opened fire on Macli-ing's home (and his neighbor's, Pedro Dungoc, another project opponent) in Bugnay, municipality of Tinglayan, in the province of Kalinga [60,66]. Instead of crippling the dissenters, the assassination unified not only the Bontoc and Kalinga Indigenous Peoples but the various Cordillera Indigenous Peoples in their opposition [55]. Subsequent mobilizations were carried out with explicit reference to Macli-ing's murder. As a result, the Marcos Government and the World Bank were pushed to abandon the Chico Dam Project [55].